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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [11. Winograd Probe Into 2nd Lebanon War](#)
- [12. Mideast](#)
- [13. Iran](#)

Key stories in the media:

Over the weekend Channel 10-TV unofficially disclosed the basic points of the interim report of the Winograd Commission probing the Second Lebanon War, which will be handed over to PM Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Amir Peretz at 4 P.M. [09:00 EDT] today, and presented to the public one hour later. All media followed in the footsteps of Channel 10-TV. The media said that the commission will determine that Olmert erred in his judgment, that Peretz was dragged behind the army, and that former IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz imposed his views on Peretz and ignored Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket threat. Ha'aretz quoted a senior Kadima member as saying last night that Olmert would sooner or later be asked by his party to step down as PM in order to avoid "dragging the party down with him." The Jerusalem Post quoted Olmert's associates as saying that they expected today to be a difficult day, but that they were not concerned that the interim report would hasten the end of Olmert's political career, because his rivals in Kadima, Labor, and Likud all have an interest in allowing him to remain prime minister -- at least until the release of the final Winograd report in July, which is expected to be more critical. The Jerusalem Post reported on FM Tzipi Livni's popularity among Kadima members, even though Olmert associates admitted there was "frustration" inside Olmert's bureau with Livni's silence about the commission's report and the spate of political meetings she has held in recent days. Ha'aretz reported that Peretz associates told the newspaper on Sunday that Peretz will apparently not be forced to resign by the commission's findings.

Yediot reported on the opposition's expected moves following the disclosure of the Winograd report. The newspaper said that Likud and National Union-National Religious Party want to move up the elections. Yediot noted Meretz's hesitancy because of the fear that new elections would bring back Binyamin Netanyahu to power. The newspaper reported that Netanyahu will respond to the report only after he reads it.

Yediot: disclosed that over the past year Syria has built a fortified compound deep underground, with dozens of bunkers ready for the launching of missiles against Israel and that the IAF cannot destroy.

Israel Radio quoted Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashal as confirming in an interview with the Palestinian daily Al-Ayyam that Fatah-Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti is included among the prisoners that Hamas wants released.

On Sunday leading media reported that on Saturday PM Olmert's bureau denied that Olmert had told the German magazine Focus that Iran's disputed program could be severely hit by firing 1,000 cruise missiles during a 10-day attack. Focus said its reporter, Amir Taheri, asked Olmert in an interview whether military action would be an option if Iran continued to defy the United Nations. It quoted Olmert as responding: "Nobody is ruling it out. It is impossible perhaps to destroy the entire nuclear program but it would be possible to damage it in such a way that it would be set back years," Focus quoted Olmert as saying. "It would take 10 days and would involve the firing of 1,000 Tomahawk cruise missiles," it quoted him as saying.

Over the weekend the media reported that on Saturday the IDF shot and killed three Palestinians who were spotted planting an explosive device next to the Gaza Strip security fence near the Kissufim Crossing. Leading media reported that over the weekend the IDF arrested dozens of Palestinians in the West Bank.

Leading media reported that IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi told the cabinet on Sunday that Hezbollah is trying move back into south Lebanon, and that weapons smuggling from Syria continues. Yediot and The Jerusalem Post quoted Ashkenazi as saying that a large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip may be necessary if Qassam rocket fire continues. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday Gen. Burhan Hammad of the Egyptian General Intelligence Force launched a scathing attack on Palestinian armed groups for continuing to fire rockets at Israel and warned that the Palestinians will pay a heavy price if the IDF invades the Gaza Strip.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday PM Olmert opposed solo efforts by Defense Minister Peretz to evacuate Hebron settler from the four-story structure they move into on March 19. Olmert was

quoted as saying that the cabinet would first hold a discussion on the subject.

The Jerusalem Post reported that US Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV) is threatening to take legislative action against Saudi Arabia following a report in The Jerusalem Post that the desert kingdom took part in an Arab League conference aimed at strengthening the boycott of Israel.

Yediot reported that in August an Indian launcher will send off the most advanced Israeli satellite so far.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post reported that New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was the most applauded among the Democratic presidential candidates who addressed the National Jewish Democratic Council last week.

The Jerusalem Post reported that over 270 BBC journalists have signed a petition opposing the decision earlier this month by the UK's largest union of journalists to boycott Israeli goods, saying they are "dismayed" at the passing of the motion.

Yediot and other media reported that on Sunday the heads of Yad Vashem called on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to dispatch an army to Darfur in order to stop the genocide there.

The Jerusalem Post noted the key role of US and Canadian Jewry in filling the role of the GOI in helping the population of northern Israel during the Second Lebanon War. The newspaper also printed an AP story that Israel will name a forest in northern Galilee after Coretta Scott King, the late widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., as the country replants thousands of trees destroyed during the war.

Ha'aretz printed an AP wire report quoting producers of Sesame Street that new episodes of the program are going on in Israel and the Palestinian territories. On Sunday Gary Knell, president of Sesame Workshop, the New York-based nonprofit group behind Sesame Street programming worldwide, met with Aliza Olmert, the PM's wife, and Education Minister Yuli Tamir. Knell was quoted as saying: "It is really about respect and tolerance."

Yediot reported that the government is demanding the expansion of Shin Bet and police supervision, especially over university and stock exchange computers.

Leading media reported that on Sunday an Israeli court sentenced Baruch Dadon, a state witness who had testified against underworld kingpin Zeev Rosenstein, to 10 years imprisonment mostly for offenses committed in the US. Rosenstein was extradited from the US in March.

Ha'aretz reported that the American hedge funds group Cerberus-Gabriel is asking Israel to give it USD 1785 million, or 17.5 percent of the price it is expected to pay for the 20-percent controlling in Bank Leumi, Israel's second-largest bank. Ha'aretz's estimate follows a conclusion reached by the Bank of Israel and the Finance Ministry that the Leumi option is worth USD 25 million a month.

11. Winograd Probe Into 2nd Lebanon War:

Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of public opinion does not want Olmert and does not want Peretz.... [But] either the people prefer to let the political establishment take its course, or else they are sick of everyone."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The public will have its say -- a large tsunami that will flood the government complex, blowing wind upon

the embers of rebellion."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "There is no reason to wait for the final report [of the Winograd Commission probing the Second Lebanon War]. The interim report is sufficient in order to justify the national lack of confidence in Olmert."

Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The polls show that disillusionment with the current government is all but universal, but where are the masses?"

Block Quotes:

II. "The Last Battle"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/30): "There was a failed war here in the summer. It was the most naked of Israel's wars.... New details can be revealed to us, here and there, but all in all, it is very hard to surprise us. We know what expectations Olmert, Peretz, and Halutz created in the public, and we know what the results were on the ground. It is not the thirst for answers that led to the committee being formed, it was the hunger for punishment.... However, the report is a very important milestone in the public battle over the responsibility for the failures of the war. There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of public opinion does not want Olmert and does not want Peretz. The question is, to what degree it does not want them. Will it go out into the streets? Will it take to the barricades? Judging by all the signs, the answer to these questions is negative. Either the people prefer to let the political establishment take its course, or else they are sick of everyone.... Olmert has been preparing for the past two weeks for the counterattack.... If only Olmert had prepared for the war the way he prepared for the war over the report, said one of his associates, perhaps there would be no committee and no report. If only."

II. "The Battle of His Life"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Ma'ariv (4/30): "Today, Ehud Olmert is starting the battle of his life. This is not even a trace of exaggeration. He has no intention of giving up. In meetings that he held over the past several days with his close associates, he sounded determined, aggressive, and combative.... Olmert has been making these very sharp statements in the direction of his deputy, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. She will pay with her head, he says. What she did to me over the past several weeks will not go away quietly. Some of those close to him swear that immediately after Olmert survives the current adventure, he intends to remove Livni. In other words: her head will roll. A warning comment should be added to that statement.... It is not clear whether Olmert is surviving.... So much for his determination. Behind closed doors, Olmert is wounded to his very soul. He feels betrayed, deceived.... Livni herself has gotten cold feet over the past several days. The 'putsch' planned for the day that the report is presented was postponed. Now they are waiting for what will happen on the street. The public will have its say -- a large tsunami that will flood the government complex, blowing wind upon the embers of rebellion."

III. "No Confidence in Olmert"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (4/30): "The vast majority of the Israeli public agreed with the justice of the government's decision not to show restraint following the Hizbullah attack on July 12 last year. The military response ran into trouble, escalated and developed into a campaign resembling full-scale war. The disappointing results of this campaign do not retroactively negate the correctness of the decision to change the policies of the previous governments led by Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon: merely watching Hizbullah's military buildup and provocations, while doing nothing. This situation, which evolved during the six years following the withdrawal from Lebanon, needed to be changed through a combined diplomatic and military effort. It is not the logic behind the campaign that proved faulty, but its execution.... On the basis of what has been published about the

interim report even before its official release, it seems that committee members did not discover any previously unknown facts that might alter the grim picture that the public drew of the war as it lengthened and proceeded to its frustrating and depressing end. The public's conclusion was unequivocal -- that the country's security should not be left to the people who failed in the war, especially in view of the threats that still hover over us. This prevailing mood is clearly reflected in all the polls, and it stands in stark contrast to Olmert's apparently strong position in the Knesset. Now, the Winograd Commission is essentially adding its findings to this general mood. There is no reason to wait for the final report. The interim report is sufficient in order to justify the national lack of confidence in Olmert."

IV. "A Watershed Event?"

Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (4/30): "The polls show that disillusionment with the current government is all but universal, but where are the masses?.... Veteran activists complain about the public's apathy and claim that we have become an insular society in which few are prepared to act upon their convictions. They hark back to the days after the 1973 Yom Kippur War when the public anger at the great failure forced prime minister Golda Meir to resign. Another historical fact less often mentioned is that despite the widespread criticism, Meir had gone on to win a general election two months after the war. She resigned only three and a half months later, despite the fact that the Agranat Commission [that probed that war] had found her decisions during the war justified. The public's anger was too great to withstand. This time around, it's also too early to count out the Israeli public, but it might take a while."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Prominent liberal novelist Amos Oz wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The time has come to admit openly that we had a role in the flight of the Palestinian refugees."

Block Quotes:

"To Deal with the Refugee Problem"

Prominent liberal novelist Amos Oz wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/29): "Every time we Israelis hear the 'problem of the 1948 refugees' our stomach contracts with anxiety and refusal. The refugee problem has become for us synonymous with the right of return, and the right of return is the destruction of Israel. Perhaps the time has come for us to put our thoughts in order and distinguish between the refugee problem and what is known as the right of return. Because the refugee problem can and must be solved by means other than a return of refugees into the State of Israel's borders of peace. The demand for the return of the refugees into the territory of the State of Israel needs to be rejected because, if it is made manifest, we will have two Palestinian states here and not a single state for the Jewish people.... The time has come to admit openly that we had a role in the flight of the Palestinian refugees: albeit, not sole responsibility and not sole blame, but our hands are not clean.... The very fact of an Israeli admission to part of the blame for the flight of the Palestinian refugees, the very expression of willingness to shoulder part of the burden of finding a solution, could create a positive shockwave on the Palestinian side. An emotional rupture of sorts that will help quite a bit with future dialogue.... Dealing with the roots of the problem will oblige addressing the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews were uprooted from their homes in Arab countries and the conclusions that stem from that fact. Both for moral reasons and for security reasons Israel needs to want to solve the problem of the Palestinian refugees from 1948. We are talking about a financial effort that is going to have to be shouldered by the countries of the West, Israel and the rich Arab states. Violence will decrease and the despair

that engenders extremism will begin to diminish when the people who live in the camps of suffering and degeneration hear that their lives in misery are about to end. And from Israel's perspective, even if we sign agreements with all of our enemies, as long as no solution is found to the plight of the refugees, we will not have quiet."

13. Iran:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Sanctions, not diplomacy, will be the primary means to avoid the twin dangers of a nuclear Iran and the necessity of military action."

Block Quotes:

"Sanctions First"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/30): "What is going on here? Why is the US, which has refused to engage in direct talks until Iran suspends uranium enrichment, attending a high level meeting with Iran? Why would the State Department, according to The Washington Post, be 'open to direct talks with... Iran over Iraq'? Is this not like inviting the fox to discuss security in the hen house? This is even more mysterious given White House criticism of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for traveling to Syria.... The mistake ... of engagement advocates is one of timing. In the case of Libya, it was obviously necessary to engage once sanctions had worked and the regime decided that its pursuit of nuclear weapons and support for terrorism were costing more than abandoning those policies. It should be equally clear, with Iran forging ahead ever faster with its nuclear program, that now is the time to change Tehran's calculus through a dramatic tightening of international sanctions. Europe, in particular, must catch up with the US in imposing financial and trade sanctions that have already been successful at increasing pressure on the regime. Sanctions, not diplomacy, will be the primary means to avoid the twin dangers of a nuclear Iran and the necessity of military action."

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